Please attach this form to your one-page nomination for AAPL Lifetime Achievement Award summarizing: 1) Demonstrated Leadership; 2) Integrity; 3) Contribution to Profession;

Lifetime Achievement Award

4) Contribution to Industry and; 5) Contribution to Community for nominee’s entire land career. Active Members and Retired Active Members may be considered for this award. Current Executive Committee members may not be submitted, and self-nominations will not be considered. Photograph (or negative) of the nominee should be attached to the entry.

## NAME OF NOMINEE:

## CHESTER A. KEETON, CPL/ESA LOCAL ASSOCIATION AFFILIATION:

## SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN ASSOCIATION

NOMINATED BY:

Richard D. Adkins, CPL

SAAPL Secretary Treasurer and National Director

A chance encounter in the spring of 1979 at a Cadillac dealership in Central Kentucky was the inauspicious beginnings of a legendary Appalachian Landman career.

Murff Bledsoe III had driven his Eldorado up from Houston to east Ky and southern WV to oversee a competitive lease play in the Appalachian Basin for E&P company Cities Services of Tulsa. Along the way he developed car troubles while visiting a friend’s Bluegrass thoroughbred horse farm and took the Caddy into Quantrell Cadillac in Lexington Ky for repairs. Murff, being the ever frenetic and multi tasking, overachieving Land Broker he always was known to be, needed to be back in TX for an important meeting in a couple days and when the dreaded diagnosis came back that the Caddy would need to stay in the shop for a few days, a young enterprising salesman at the dealership named Chester Keeton offered to drive him to the nearby Blue Grass Airport to catch the next thing smoking back to Houston.

  To say Mr Keeton was enterprising, may be an understatement. As just one vivid example of the breadth and bounds of his ambitious sales technique, during the Coal Boom of the mid 1970s the Ky coalfields were awash in cash after the Arab Oil Embargo sent coal prices into the stratosphere and every coal miner wanted a Caddy- some coal operators wanted several- so Chester talked a couple of his salesman buddies into coming along with him and driving new Sedan de Villes, Fleetwoods and Eldorados up to the county seats of Pikeville, Prestonsburg, Hazard and Harlan on different days of the week. They would park the shiny new rides in all their chrome splendor in front of the courthouse or in a prevalent place downtown with a note on the sticker that said “This car can go home with you today, here’s my card and I’m sitting at the snack bar over at Jerry’s Restaurant if you’re interested.” More often than not, they had to call someone to come drive them back to Lexington when they usually sold out all their inventory, and normally for cold hard cash.

Along the way to the airport that fateful day, Murff suddenly realized that he still had a whole box of signed, original leases in the trunk of the car for which the bonuses had recently been paid for but which  still needed to be recorded asap in a race notice state in several remote mountain courthouses. His subcontractors were sure several of the larger landowners had signed multiple leases and taken upfront money for the same acreage and exact same interests from more Lessees than just his client.

“Son could you help me out and take these instruments and get them placed of record for me in the clerk recorders offices?” Murff asked Chester.

“Sure” Chester replied “ as long as you just tell me exactly what needs to be done and how to do it.”

From that point on, Chester continued working with Murff and other brokers leasing and running title across the Appy and Illinois Basins. He formed C.A. Keeton Landman Inc. and became involved in AAPL right out of the gate, earning his CPL, first joining the Michael Late Benedum chapter and later also being one of the charter members and officers of the new Appalachian Association chapter (NKA Southern Appalachian Assn).

When the bottom soon fell out of the oil and gas markets, Chester saw a new opportunity and seized it when KY, WV and other nearby states started mandating that old leaky and radon- contaminated gasoline tanks had to be replaced and remediated by law. Chester soon added the ESA certification to his credentials and was much in demand when others struggled to find land work in the late 80’s and 90’s.

With the technology and infrastructure boom that arose in the mid to late 1990s related to the Internet buildout came yet another opportunity for C.A. Keeton Landman Inc. They developed a novel “turnkey” contractor alternative to the traditional motivation smothering day rate+ expenses compensation structure which delivered ink and vetted title on signed easements and ROW’s to clients such as Sprint for fiber optics and telecom routes across the Northeast USA. When they- and their now profit-motivated sub contractor agents- delivered a critical, much-needed 50+ mile span of a fiber optic project running across southeastern PA under budget and way in advance of the deadline, the industry and clients took notice.

When NAPE was still just an upstart idea in a few dreamer’s heads, Chester saw the potential early and in the first few years, was often the only independent broker with prospects on the wall from Appalachia at the shows. Landfolk from around the country who didn’t’ already know him from previous projects became familiar with the outspoken self-proclaimed “Hillbilly Landman” wearing the rainbow suspenders and spinning yarns about the nuances of land work in Appalachia. Among these acquaintances was a group of forward-thinking geologists loosely known as *“The Unconventionals*” who had been successfully working the Barnett Shale play in TX and already had their eyes focused on the immense Marcellus reserves in WV and PA just as Range Resources was still fine- tuning horizontal drilling and fracing techniques and proving it’s value as a potential resource play in the SW PA section of that formation.

When Chesapeake purchased Columbia Natural Resources LLC from Triana Energy Holdings in November 2005 and set off the spark that would become the great Marcellus and Shale land grab, Chester was literally on the next plane to OKC to meet with Aubrey McClendon et al. He came back with a couple of New Albany Shale prospect areas to work as well and set a small army of experienced landmen and abstractors – all working under the same turnkey compensation structure which stressed quick turnaround on complex title and inked leases- to gainful work leasing up the geological areas of interest laid out by the Unconventionals. Their early jump start and intimate knowledge of the Basin proved beneficial. By the time the dust settled in late 2009, The Keeton Group of companies had leased up nearly a million acres of prospective land in WV, OH and PA and purchased outright oil and gas and mineral interests to the tune of approximately 550,000 net acres by hydrocarbon conveyance.

Today the Chester and Jan Keeton Scholarship administered by EMLF provides great opportunities for landmen seeking to attend law schools in the Appalachian Basin region. And Chester is always on the lookout for another Texas Landman needing help.